

INFECTION CONTROL (Communicable Disease Control)

INTRODUCTION

This document provides general information about the regulating authorities and their guidelines, laws, and rules and regulations that govern the control of communicable diseases in dental facilities in Indiana.

This information is provided for educational purposes only. The Oral Health Program (OHP) at the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) cannot provide legal opinions on the interpretation of guidelines, laws, and rules and regulations. Dental professionals are responsible for understanding and applying these as they pertain to the practice of dentistry in Indiana.

REGULATING AUTHORITIES

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) uses the term *infection control* to refer to a large range of activities designed to prevent the spread of infection and has published guidelines for dental health care settings pertaining to infection control.

Infection control activities, including the use of universal precautions and the management of infectious waste, help prevent and control the spread of infection among healthcare workers, patients, and the general public.

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the state of Indiana Occupational Safety and Health Administration (IOSHA) establish standards pertaining to occupational exposure to blood and other potentially infectious material (OPIM). Generally, the standards established by IOSHA are the same as those established by OSHA.

The Indiana legislature has passed laws (Indiana Code) to protect public health. Indiana Code, Title 16, includes Article 41 pertaining to public health measures for preventing and controlling communicable disease. Within Article 41 are Chapter 11, covering training in health precautions for communicable diseases (IC 16-41-11), and Chapter 16 covering the treatment of infectious waste (IC 16-41-16).

These laws provide for the establishment of rules and regulations (Indiana Administrative Code) that govern the functions of state agencies in preventing communicable disease. The ISDH functions under Indiana Administrative Code, Title 410. Universal precautions and infectious waste are covered under this code with universal precautions being covered under Rule 4 (410 IAC 1-4) and infectious waste being covered under Rule 3 (410 IAC 1-3). These establish specific activities with which dental facilities must comply and delineate the responsibilities of the ISDH to help ensure this compliance.

It should be emphasized that many of these guidelines, laws, and rules and regulations overlap, and all may serve to guide the OHP during its investigations into alleged violations of universal precautions.

Although the OHP may use OSHA rules and regulations to help guide its investigations of alleged violations of universal precautions, it is not the responsibility of the OHP to investigate alleged violations of OSHA rules and regulations as they pertain to the relationship between an employer and employee.

INDIANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Indiana Administrative Code specifically assigns the ISDH the responsibility of investigating complaints alleging violations of universal precautions. The OHP at the ISDH has historically been assigned the role of investigating alleged violations of universal precautions in dental facilities in the state and continues to fulfill this responsibility.

Indiana Code gives the ISDH the right to inspect facilities for possible violations pertaining to infectious waste. As part of investigations into alleged violations of universal precautions in dental facilities, the OHP reviews the written policies and procedures of these facilities for containing, labeling, and treating infectious waste and reviews the necessary documentation associated with the transport and disposal of infectious waste.